

TRIBUTE TO BOB PALMER, DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR OF THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE

HON. NANCY PELOSI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 24, 2004

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my deep appreciation for the distinguished and colorful career of Dr. Robert E. Palmer. At the end of this Congress, Bob will retire, having served on the Committee on Science for 25 years. He is retiring as the Democratic Staff Director of the Committee on Science—having served in that position for longer than any other person in the history of the Committee.

Bob began his career with the Committee in the late 1970s as a Congressional Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Rather than return to academia as a research marine biologist—his field of training—Bob elected to stay on the Science Committee staff. For a quarter century, Bob has been a central participant in science and technology policy. Though he has worked largely in the background, he has made significant contributions to our Nation's well-being.

Bob was not a typical scientist. As an undergraduate, he studied psychology at Harvard and served as a Vista Volunteer. He supported himself in such varied ways as moving furniture, playing music and even working as a private detective. He left Massachusetts for the University of Delaware, where he earned a Ph.D. in marine biology. It was after he had completed his graduate work that he started on the Committee as a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) expert. Among his first critical assignments was to help negotiate the transition of LANDSAT from a government program to an operational satellite system in the private sector. This was followed by a leadership role on the Global Change Research Act. That initiative has led to the research that underpins much of our knowledge of global climate change today. He also set up a key hearing on the Search and Rescue Satellite Program that prevented that important international program from being canceled.

In the mid-1980s Dr. Palmer was promoted to Committee management. He first served as the staff Director of the Subcommittee on International Scientific Cooperation and then the Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight. He played a major role in the staff investigation of the Challenger accident, including studying issues around the fatal decision to launch.

On the I & O Subcommittee he led the investigation into problems with the NOAA-NASA weather satellite program. Without his work, it is likely that the country would have suffered some break in the gathering of real-time, high-quality data regarding emerging dangerous weather patterns. Such a break in coverage would have meant lost lives and increased property damage. Subsequent investigative work by Bob led to the resignation and later indictment and conviction of an Inspector General at an agency in the Committee's jurisdiction. His early work as a private detective ended up serving him well in his role on the Committee.

These are just a few specific examples of Bob's role in the work of the Committee. But he has helped draft numerous pieces of legislation, worked to investigate misconduct, served in many conferences with the Senate as the lead Democratic staffer and worked with Administration figures—regardless of party—to try to insure that policies and programs reflected the intent of Congress. His intelligence, energy, experience and humor have allowed him to accomplish much.

When Dr. Radford Byerly moved to Colorado in 1993, then Science Committee Chairman George Brown choose Dr. Palmer as the natural person to replace Byerly as the staff director of the full Committee on Science, Space and Technology. Bob has continued as the Democratic staff director of the committee for over a decade, serving under three senior Democratic Members from across the political spectrum. Bob has served each with talent and professionalism and all the Members of the Committee hold him in the highest regard.

Unfortunately for the Committee and the Congress, Bob's wife Mary, an accomplished researcher and teacher, has received an academic appointment from the University of Florida. So she is leaving the University of Maryland for Gainesville and Bob will follow her there. In his typically good-natured way, he says that she followed him to Washington 25 years ago and has stayed here for his career advantage; it is his turn to relocate to support her career. We wish you both well in the future. You have served the Committee, the Congress and the country with great distinction.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 4818,
CONSOLIDATED APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2005

SPEECH OF

HON. DON YOUNG

OF ALASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Saturday, November 20, 2004

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, I rise to commend the conferees for including economic development funding for the Pribilof Islands. The economies of these Island communities have been struggling in the face of the ban on the fur seal harvest and the collapse of the crab and other fisheries in the area. The funding in this appropriations bill is a key step in helping the Aleut population of the Islands to develop a diversified, sustainable economy.

For over 100 years, the Federal Government controlled the Natives' fur seal harvest on the Islands, as well as their social and municipal services. In the 1980s the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Congress embarked on a plan for transition of the Islands to independence and economic self-sufficiency. One of the most important aspects of the plan was that the Federal Government would transfer control of the fur seal harvests to the Natives and permit the Natives to keep the income from the harvests. Unfortunately, one year after the plan was developed, the Government banned fur seal harvesting on environmental grounds and removed a critical source of regular income from the community.

Four years ago, the Congress enacted the Pribilof Island Transition Act, which I authored.

I worked closely with my Alaska colleagues in the other body in crafting that legislation and shepherding it through the legislative process. The Act was aimed at compensating for the loss of the fur seal industry and for the delays in implementation of two other key objectives of the transition plan: construction of usable harbors and transfer of lands from NOAA to Island entities. The Transition Act authorized \$28 million for economic development over a period of five years. This is the first year that funds have been appropriated for this purpose, and it comes at a crucial time.

It is my hope that additional funding for Pribilof Island economic development will be forthcoming in the years ahead.

THERE IS NO THERE THERE

HON. BARNEY FRANK

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 24, 2004

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, the recent resignation—apparently encouraged by the President—of Secretary of State Powell has stripped one of the important facades behind which the reality of the Bush foreign policy has been hidden. It is deeply regrettable that the President and the Secretary of State worked together to keep this façade in place until now, because the fact that the Secretary of State would be leaving is the sort of information that would have been relevant to the voters on Election Day. There is no clear evidence that Secretary Powell had any great influence on the Administration's foreign policy, but his having been around did I think help the Administration in its effort to appear more reasonable in its foreign policy than it has been.

But Secretary Powell's leaving is not the only recent example we have of a facade being lifted from this Administration's record in international affairs. In the Washington Post Monday, November 15, Fred Hiatt points out another great gap between the reality of the President's foreign policy and the way in which the Administration has described it—the issue of the promotion of democracy as a goal of American foreign policy.

As Mr. Hiatt notes, when JOHN KERRY “made clear that promoting democracy abroad would not be a priority of his presidency,” this quote “allowed George W. Bush to claim the high moral ground of foreign policy.” As Mr. Hiatt notes, the President asserted at his nominating convention in 2004, “I believe in the transformational power of liberty . . . the wisest use of American strength is to advance freedom.”

But as he points out, this high-minded statement of purpose bears very little relation to the Bush foreign policy in reality.

Mr. Hiatt clearly documents the President's high tolerance for wholly undemocratic actions by foreign nations as long as they are compliant with American foreign policy in other regards. Indeed, as he notes, the only two examples that can be cited by the President's defenders in which the goal of promoting democracy has played a role are Afghanistan and Iraq. And these examples in no way bear out the claim that the President has made the advancement of democracy a central part of his foreign policy—or even a peripheral one.